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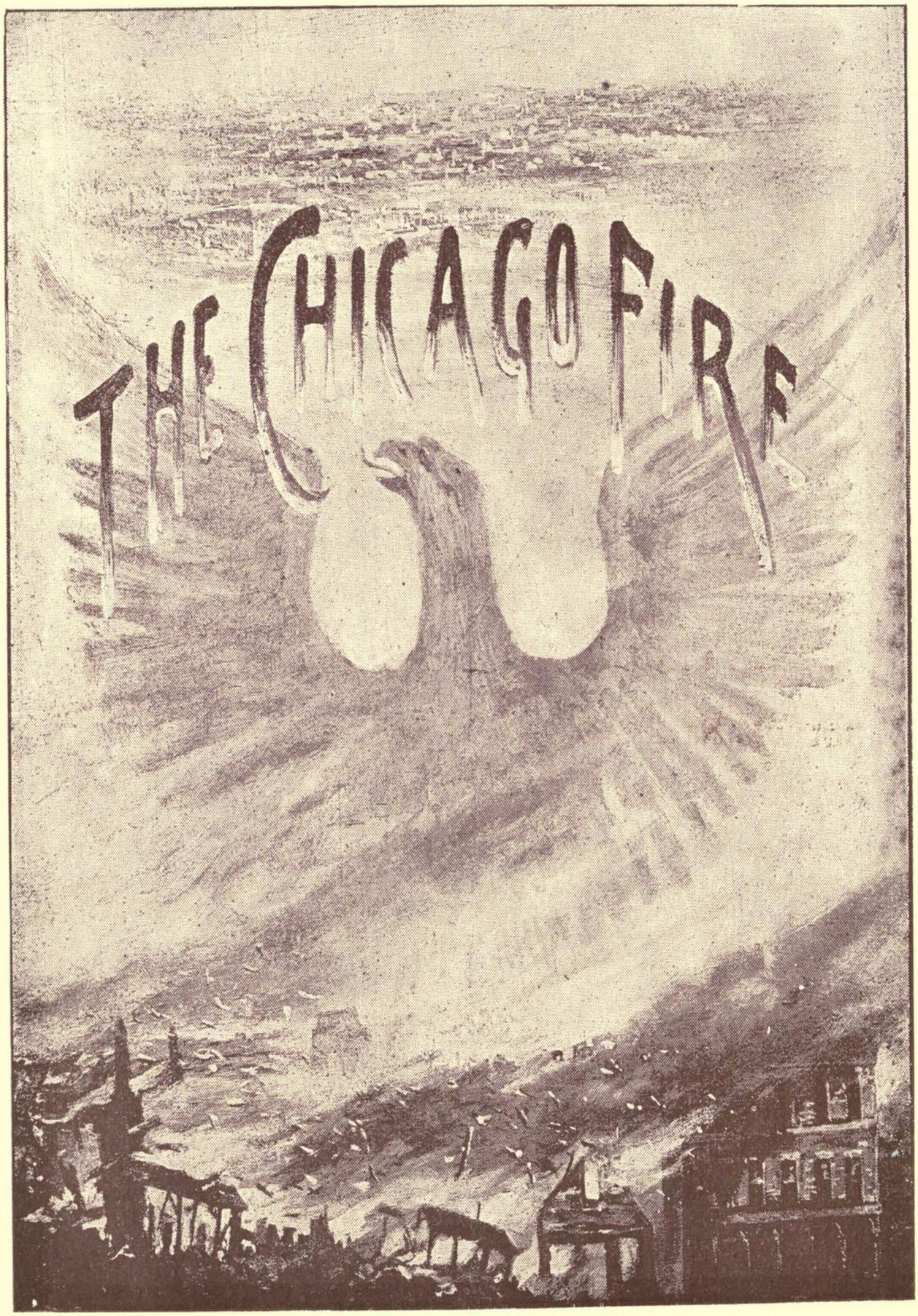
A STORY OF

# The Chicago Fire

BY REV. DAVID SWING.

PRICE, TEN CENTS.




# A STORY OF THE CHICAGO FIRE

By Rev. David Swing.

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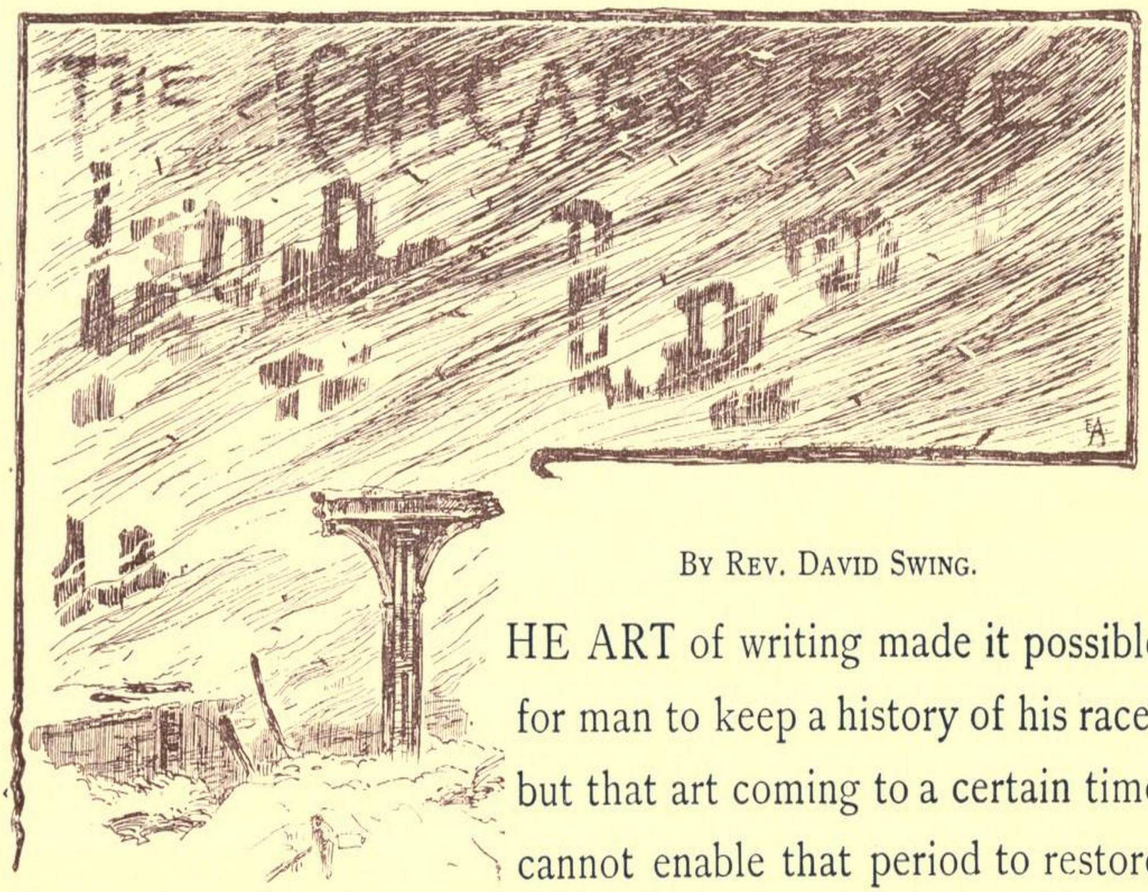


By Rev. David Swing.

THE ART of writing made it possible for man to keep a history of his race; but that art coming to a certain time cannot enable that period to restore the lost facts of the past. Tacitus could put upon record the events of his own age, but his pen was powerless to make a true biography of a Moses or a Xerxes. The writing of history must be done at the time and place of the events; the historian, like the painter, must work in the presence of his subject. As no artist can paint the portrait of a dead or absent friend, so no writer can delineate an absent epoch.

The fact that an age possesses the art of writing and is proud of the art, gives no high assurance that it will impress the pen and parchment into the service of history. The popular taste

may turn toward poetry or the drama, philosophy or fable. The human race has always been the victim of specialties. Homer would have felt degraded had any local club asked him to write a history of his own town or district or state. Genius like his must honor itself by setting to verse only what never came to pass; a record of the actual would have been a disgrace to the Homeric studio and inkhorn. The middle and dark ages composed a vast quantity of metaphysical literature, but no scholars entertained the idea of putting on record the condition and deeds of their own centuries.

The present is, of all ages, the most fond of history. As it was taught by the inductive philosophy to extract wisdom from facts, it asks each day to report its series of facts. The Civil War, which swept over this land for four years, is now stored away in the most complete history ever made of any war upon earth. To the text of an army of writers was added the art of picturing each incident. The fall of each officer, the armies on the march, the hosts in battle, the camp-fire, the hospital, the troops crossing a stream, the pickets on duty, the gun-boats, the negro contrabands, the victories, the defeats, are all stored away, not only in the text of the historian, but also in the portfolio of the artist. The discovery of photography has more and more inflamed the

TYPES FROM THE CANVAS.

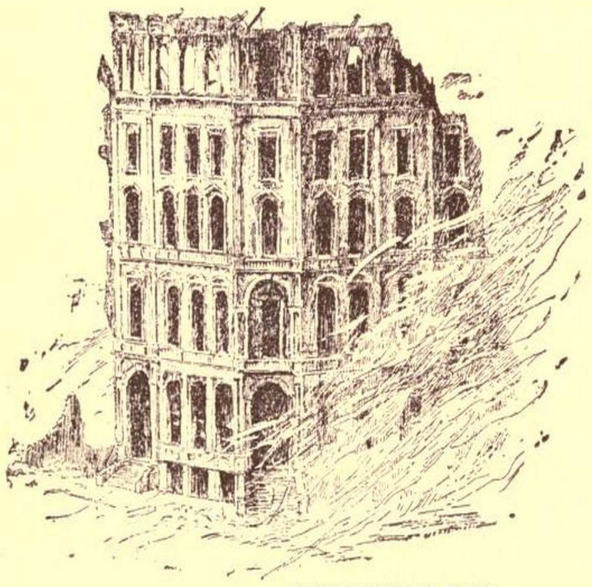
public passion for history, and has made more possible the perfect reproduction of all the thrilling or beautiful things of yesterday.

In the years which preceded the Chicago fire, local pride—which amounted almost to vanity—had quietly induced every business man to own a picture of his place. Each holder of realty could not sleep in peace until he had secured a good photograph of the street which was adorned by his structure; each clergyman felt sure that the work of the gospel would be advanced greatly by a good picture of the building in which certain eloquent preaching was done; the grain men looked after the interests of their elevators and the compilers of guide-books and railway specialties published views of bridges, public buildings, docks, depots and shipping. This local pride was a hidden blessing; for when, on a certain morning, all this "pomp and circumstance" was reduced to dust, the pictures came back to tell the public what that city was which passed away so suddenly one October.

FULLERTON AVE.
LINCOLN AVE.
LINCOLN PARK
LAKE MICHIGAN
BURNED DISTRICT
CLYBOURNE AVE.
NORTH AVE.
DIVISION ST.
LARRABEE ST.
WELLS ST.
OGDEN'S HOUSE
CHICAGO AVE.
Water Works
RUSH ST.
NORTH BRANCH
MILWAUKEE AVE.
KINZIE ST.
CHICAGO RIVER
Point of View in Cyclorama
LAKE ST.
RANDOLPH ST.
WASHINGTON ST.
COURT HOUSE
MADISON ST.
UNION
HALSTED
DES PLAINES
JEFFERSON
CLINTON
FIFTH AVE.
CLARK ST.
STATE ST.
MICHIGAN AVE.
ADAMS ST.
SOUTH BRANCH
CANAL
VAN BUREN ST.
HARRISON ST.
ORIGIN OF FIRE
12TH ST.
POOLE BROS., CHICAGO.
2097

TYPES FROM THE CANVAS.

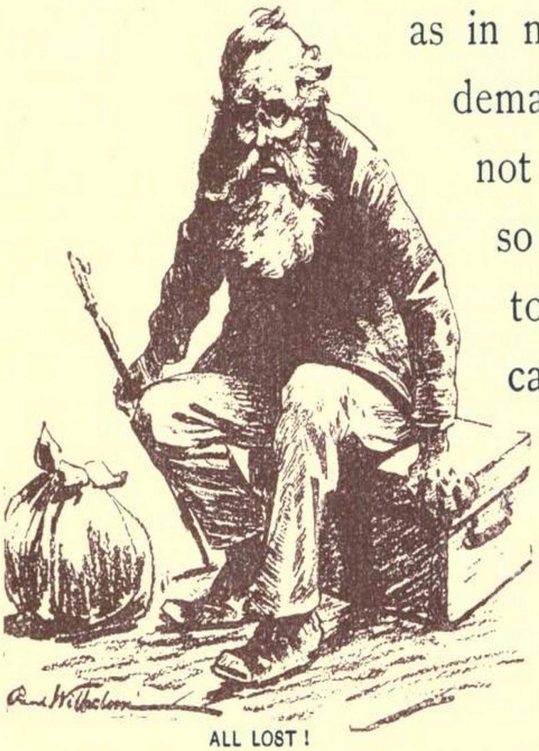
The scene of that night and day is restored; and the history which words might afford is rendered tame and weak when compared with this vivid reproduction made by a group of the most gifted painters. So truthful is this panorama that those who lived in the city at the time of the conflagration see again the doors which they once entered, the bridges they once crossed and the churches in which they worshipped on that last Sunday of the old régime.



FIRST NATIONAL BANK.

Although the gentleman, Mr. Howard H. Gross, who designed the picture of the Chicago fire, possessed all these aids, he found few men who at first believed that any kind of image could be made of such a conflagration. We were all too full of the immensity of the old

fact to be able to do justice to the skill of the new artists of the world. The age had created a new kind of genius, for in mind, as in matter, a supply is liable to follow a demand. The projector of the scheme was not easily turned aside from his purpose, so he bade his faint-hearted friends step to the rear. What followed may well be called a great page in history. It is the burning of a great city, not as read of, but as seen. The artists had to meet new problems—those of making a canvas, which was bent in both a horizontal and a vertical curve, present a true building to the eye of the spectator. The difficulties were met, and the whole work is a piece of realism not often accomplished.



ALL LOST!

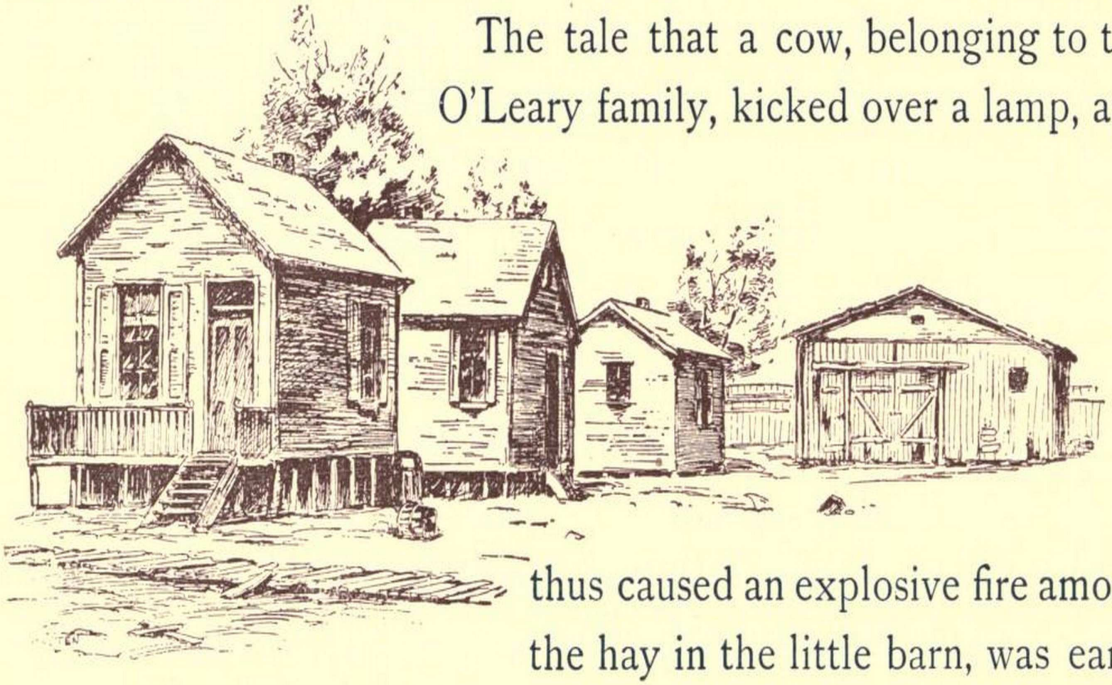
The former Chicago fell a victim to what must be called a fortuitous concurrence of incidents. Those incidents are worthy of mention. Rising up in a lumber region, its dwelling houses were commonly of wood; it grew so rapidly that the fire department was not enlarged rapidly enough to enable it to keep equal to the growing demands; the firemen had been worn out at a

TYPES FROM THE CANVAS.

twelve-hour task on the night before the great fire was destined to spring up; the great flame broke out among acres of tinder, almost as inflammable as powder; near these acres of dry stuff stood the lofty structures of the business portion of the city; a wind flying fifty miles an hour carried the mighty column of sparks and cinders from the wooden tenements to the high roofs of the central city. In a half hour after the first blaze was seen, it was as though a Vesuvius were pouring a torrent of lava upon the classic towns at its base. In one hour a hundred engines would have been as powerless to stay this destruction as they would have been to quench Vesuvius in the days of the Plinys. The hot wave poured forward like that volume of water which a few years ago swept down the valley of the Conemaugh.

Sunday evening at 8.45, October 8, 1871, flames were seen issuing from the door and roof of a small stable. The alarm was responded to rather tardily by the fire companies. The men had

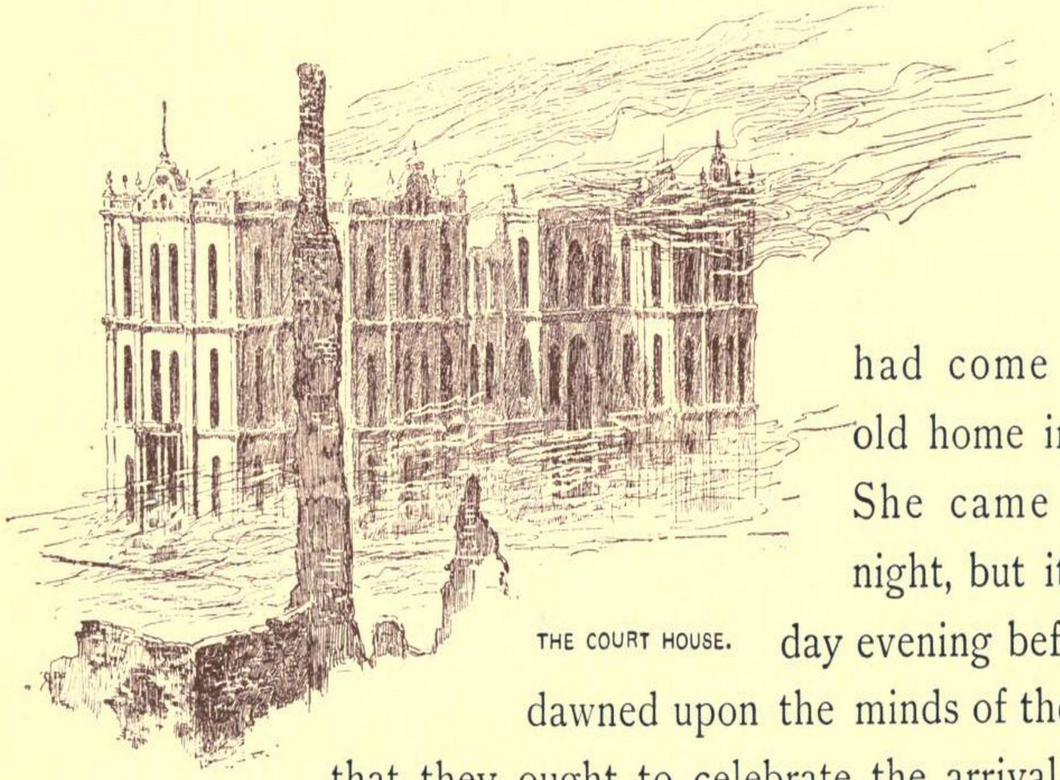
been worn out the previous night. It is said to have been almost a half hour before the work of fighting the enemy had been started. Rapidly the little blaze passed into a large one, and soon both the fire department and the spectators began to say: "This is destined to be something awful." In a very few minutes poor people were seen hurrying out of their cottages or shanties—the first members of that procession which was soon to number a hundred thousand citizens.



WHERE MRS. O'LEARY LIVED.

The tale that a cow, belonging to the O'Leary family, kicked over a lamp, and thus caused an explosive fire among the hay in the little barn, was early shown to be false. On that hot evening the famous Mrs. O'Leary milked her cow long before sunset, and testified that she took no lamp or light to the building. That the fire started in the O'Leary barn admits of no doubt, but it is not

known what person may have set the hay on fire, nor in what manner the deed was done. The best authenticated story is that which declares that at the rear of the O'Leary cot lived in peace and happiness a little family, to whose hospitality a young girl



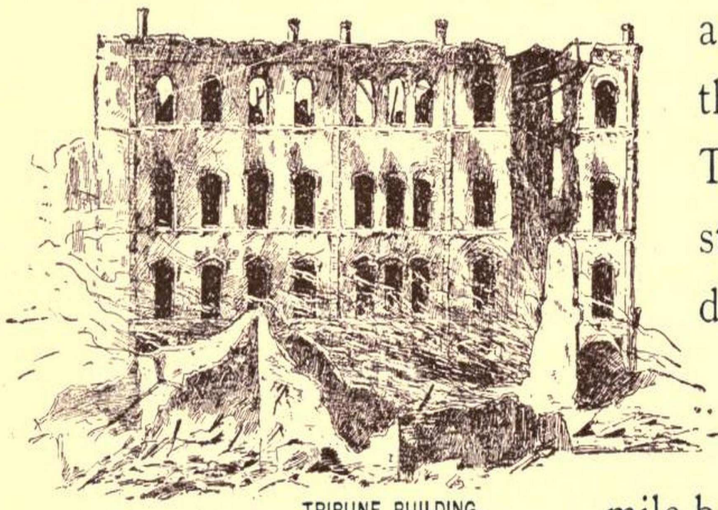
THE COURT HOUSE.

had come from the old home in Ireland. She came Saturday night, but it was Sunday evening before it fully dawned upon the minds of the cottagers that they ought to celebrate the arrival of such a dear friend who had journeyed so far. But no happy event can be celebrated without the help of food and drink. Inasmuch as October has in it the letter "r," oysters were thought of. The oysters came soon after the thought of them had sprung into existence, but there was wanting the milk needed for making a good stew. A young man, who was not unwilling to display his

ingenuity to the distinguished guest, proposed that he work his way into the O'Leary stable and secure the much needed article. It was 8.30. He had to take a lamp, for no strange man would be foolish enough to find and milk a strange cow in the dark. The rest of this story is well known to millions of people and to insurance companies of England and America. It lies nearest the truth. It is the best of the stories of the "cow." Destruction began in a structure held by the O'Learys, and in the front of the building, which now stands where the O'Leary cottage stood, there is a tablet which tells strangers exactly where the first smoke of the battle arose.

This starting point was about a half mile to the southwest of the massive business portion of the city. This business area was a little more than a half mile square. It was almost wholly occupied by solid brick, stone and iron blocks. Here were the hotels, the theatres, the music halls, the opera house, a few massive churches, and here the banks and the immense and costly structures dedicated to business. Toward this costly district the flames bounded from the start. The mad wind whirled smoke and blaze and coals off toward the tall fabrics, and soon the streets which had long been famous for their hum of business were only channels along which rolled great volumes of fire and smoke.

For a half hour sanguine minds thought the fire would remain on the west side of the little river. It was hoped that a few squares, northeast of the O'Leary barn, would satisfy the hungry monster. But all these hopeful hearts had failed to estimate the power of the wind. The wind carried burning shingles, also pieces of building paper a yard square. When the light frame work of a barn had been consumed the wind would take up an armful of burning hay and throw it upward and onward. The river was no obstacle. A stream only a hundred feet wide did not interfere in the least with burning torches which intended perhaps to travel a mile before touching roof or ground.



TRIBUNE BUILDING.

One of the most thrilling moments of that Sunday night was that in which many persons said: "See! see! the fire has crossed the river!" When the firemen saw great six-story buildings, far away, suddenly burst out in one vast blaze, their hearts failed them and their faithful engines seemed only playthings for children.

Starting at a given point, the fire could not work backwards. On account of the wind, the movement of the enemy had to be in

a fan-shaped form and forward. It widened as it went. But cutting through to the lake on its right wing, it was compelled to advance all of Monday in the shape of an irregular triangle, with its base widening each hour.

Before the destruction crossed the river it was backed up by a hundred acres of ruin at its starting point. Bateham's mill was four stories high. Around its mass of wooden stuff were a thousand cords of kindling wood, six hundred thousand feet of lumber and more than a million shingles. This dry material, covering an acre and a half of ground, made a blaze which was simply appalling. From that one fire alone were hurled upward pieces of burning board four feet in length, and yet it was only one angry spot in a hundred acres of such wrath. The heat and blaze and cinders from this immense space were all moving to the northeast and arching over the costly buildings they intended soon to destroy. In the presence of such heat the hose of the fire engines was roasted. From some of the engines the firemen ran with their hair scorched and their hands blistered. Engines had to be abandoned and were left to die with their wheels running to the last.

IT MUST BE SAVED.

The Parmelee Omnibus Company had just completed a kind of palace for their horses and vehicles. The barn had cost about seventy-five thousand dollars and had enjoyed a few days of free exhibition. This was the point at which the enemy entered the East, or South Side. It was half-past eleven o'clock. In two and a half hours all the buildings had been swept from one hundred acres of land. But a large task was still to be performed; the rolling flame had still fourteen hundred acres to transform into a desert.

At this point and time the pen of the historian becomes powerless. The scene redoubles its grandeur as the buildings redouble their size and their significance. The roar of the flames grows, and the falling of walls and iron columns beats a kind of funereal time to hoarse music. The faces of men grow more solemn. Thousands of persons, who had long been watching from the roofs of hotels and public buildings the moving volcano, said to each other: "We must leave, we must save what we can."

There were twenty-five hotels that must be destroyed, three thousand buildings in this one district which must be vacated at once. It being the time of the autumn travel, the hotels were all full. It was not quite midnight when the clerk of the Palmer House ordered every person to be aroused and be told that they

must take to the street. There was no need of any panic and none occurred. The "transients" went to the desk and paid bills up to the last tea. Well dressed people carried down stairs their own trunks and valises. One by one and group by group the inmates went out into the warm air. They needed no street lamps; there was an adequate illumination of land and sky.

The Sherman House was in the first line of the fire, and had to be vacated with a little less of deliberation. There were five sick ladies in the house. Four of these were carried down and out to such carriage or vehicle as could be found. One invalid, who was cared for by the hotel chambermaids, had been forgotten. The faithful clerk asked for her and soon some policemen and others hastened up to her room. They found her sitting up in her bed wondering about the noise and tumult. She was removed from the great building only a few minutes before it added itself to the wide army of smoke and fire.

Up to this time the fire must not be thought of as one wide, solid wave. The main army threw out advanced squads. By the time the Sherman fell there must have been twenty or thirty enormous conflagrations. There were houses burning far in advance of the main, wide march. There were many islands of fire in the sea of houses. Each one of these advanced guards seemed to say: "Fall back everybody, for a great army is coming."

At about three o'clock Monday morning the water works building burst into flames, and soon the timbers of the roof fell into the machinery. The burning of the Lill Brewing and Malt House, on the south side of the water works, overwhelmed with coals and heat, the machinery which had in former days and years been prompt to supply and protect. The fire, which began at the O'Leary barn, had moved straight to the water works and reached that point in six hours, although it had been compelled to cut a channel two miles and a quarter in length.

The most fearful hour of the twenty-six must have been about five o'clock Monday morning. The separate conflagrations had spread until they had become merged into one. The bridges which connected the north and south divisions were on fire. Tugs were puffing in their efforts to draw valuable vessels out into the wide lake. At the Rush street bridge ships were in flames. The homeless people were crowding toward the north lake shore in not only great numbers, but in the most amazing disorder The rich and the poor, the well and ill, those about to get married and those about to die, those who had a dead child or dead friend in

the house, persons in carriages, persons in spring wagons, persons on foot and carrying trunks, terrified horses, cows led by a rope, dogs, cats, canary birds, parrots, women carrying furniture, men with wheelbarrows, great trucks full of costly goods from some mercantile house, servant girls carrying in their arms their best dress, their prayer book and their photograph album, combined to make a scene not often repeated in the history of man's misfortunes. Wonderful scene when a hundred thousand persons must move in one night at the bidding of such a tyrant as a wave of fire!

The Marine Hospital, near the Rush street bridge, the Rush street bridge and the Lake House, were objects of great interest, because the city, which seemed to be dying around these points, had begun its life there. There was Fort Dearborn with its memory of whites, Indians and massacre; there was the hospital where sick seamen had found care and comfort when the West was indeed wild; there was the bridge where once skiffs and canoes and then pontoons had been the means of crossing the little stream; while just over the river the Lake House stood, whose old fashioned walls and rooms had once been the tavern for all the founders of the mercantile and moral Chicago; and one square south of Fort Dearborn stood the little hotel which

"fed and slept" once the Prince of Wales, when he was a gay lad off on a visit to America.

It was pitiful to see these historic objects sink on that Monday morning. The invalids who had sat on the old porches of the hospital or had reclined in the neat bed-rooms while the autumn days were passing were rudely dispersed; the Richmond House said a hasty good-bye to the English Prince; the Rush street bridge did its last work in the world and the Lake House shook its table cloth and rang its old supper bell for the last time. These historic objects all went down at one and the same moment.

The Rush street bridge, being nearest the lake and east of the first line of the fire, was the last to burn. When Mayor Mason could not get to the South Side by the bridge at Wells or Clark or State street, he found the Rush street bridge still sound. He worked his way through the throng on that last link. Its last hour of business was the heaviest of its history—at least, it was the most exciting hour. Many were driven toward it by the common enemy. A few hundred yards to the northeast of that bridge lay the "sands"—a wide, long shore without great buildings, and much of it was free from all that could burn. Toward that refuge a mixed throng poured over the Rush street bridge. All were terrified. Even the horses had to be led, for they had become

helpless through fear. A propeller lay burning a hundred yards east of the bridge, and great lofty fires were at hand on the west. Amid smoke, dust, wind, sparks and mingled noises of all kinds at once, men, women and teams struggle northward. The men who had long turned the bridge to let the shipping pass rang the bell no more. They had reached a time when no ship could wish to pass in or out between such hot banks. At length the bridge itself took fire, and the feet that ventured became few. The bridge tenders deserted reluctantly their post of duty and in an hour this historic spot was taken from the gaze of man.

The breadth and the advance of the devourer were awe-inspiring. The mind became full of wonders, fears and sympathies. The house of a precious friend was falling, the parents and the children were in the street. Men who on Sunday were rich, on Monday were poor. Buildings worth a million were passing in an hour into blaze and smoke, churches were pointing to Heaven with blazing spires. The organ pipes were roaring, but not with music. The Bible on the sacred desk was burning with the burning pulpit. The beautiful decorations of costly structures reared to Religion, or the Opera, or the Drama, were all hurrying back to dust. In the private houses the costly book-cases with

their volumes, the carved work in the stairway and the dining-room, the piano, the curtains, the pillows and the chairs were all hastening to join the kingdom of ashes. Here and there a human being, stifled with smoke or disabled by age or disease, fell down and died and was buried in a few moments by an avalanche of hot walls. At this hour there were five hundred acres of solid fire—a hot sea without one island—and here were passing away a hundred and fifty millions of property. Man, with all his boasted science and wit and inventions, looked toward the spectacle and felt his insignificance. Egotism and philosophy put aside their difference and agreed in making a speedy retreat.

As early as one o'clock Sunday night, Mayor Mason suggested, or ordered, that buildings must be leveled with powder along the south line of the flames. The entire city would be destroyed if men failed to blow up a few buildings. The fire would advance against the wind by the direct radiation of heat. But it was seven or eight o'clock Monday morning before the blowing-up of houses actually began. Gen. Sheridan turned his energy to that work. He was ably assisted by men known and unknown to him. The first building to be blown to pieces was a frame structure on the corner of State and Harrison streets. Its

destruction was followed by some three-story brick houses. In a short time a boundary was set to the spread of the fire southward. The lake bounded it on the east. It could run only northward, if the wind should not change. The wind held to its course, and by the help of a slight shower of rain the fire ended about three and a half miles from where it began.

It would be more pleasant to write in the name of this great event had the history no disgraceful page. But in the midst of deserted saloons all kinds of liquors became free, and on Monday morning drunkenness and stealing added to the misery of the spectacle. Young men and old joined most recklessly in deeds of crime. In the south division, where great efforts were being made to save valuable goods, there rushed to and fro men mad with the prospect of stealing riches, and men mad with liquor, of all grades and colors. It soon became evident that the awakened thieves and turbulent characters might desire the sacking of the city to be made more complete and might start new fires in the remaining parts of the city. A new invoice of bad men was arriving each hour. The taste of plunder having been once awakened and enjoyed, it was not probable that its victims would be restrained by simple respect for the rights of good citizens.

So many were the criminal deeds committed on Monday, and so helpless lay the city authority, that Gen. Sheridan was asked to take command of life and property. He did so, and in a few hours all honest hearts were cheered by seeing the forms and guns of soldiers from the nearest cities. In the meantime the railways were bearing United States troops to new kind of war. The soldiers came none too soon. Men were caught starting new fires. The common rumor was that some of these thugs died on the spot. For some reason the air was soon full of a healthy dread of the troops, and by Wednesday General Sheridan was able to report that all was quiet. Thus, the General's name stands associated with the powder that stopped the fire and the other powder that headed off the complete sacking and burning of the remains of the great metropolis.

Such a calamity waked up the inner nature of each man, and made some hearts shine out in their real nobleness and other hearts reveal their intrinsic meanness. Some expressmen, having charged enormous sums for conveying valuable goods to a fixed point, either stole the goods or else dumped them on the ground, and then loaded up for some new customer. Some revealed a quiet willingness to aid some family for a moderate sum, and

having loaded up with choice goods went away ten miles to where some married daughter or son would be delighted with the articles "father" had saved from the fire!

All who were in the midst of the scene confessed then, and now repeat, that the charity which followed the fire was a more impressive event than the sea of flames. No such world-wide sympathy and action had ever before graced humanity. Civilization had made the human heart warm; the telegraph had come to express instantly the new love. Before the fire was out train-loads of provisions had started from the nearest cities. On Tuesday the telegraphs of the world were sending messages to the shores of Lake Michigan. On Wednesday the messages came more rapidly than they could be read and measured. Nations, cities, corporations, individuals, offered aid. The Queen at her throne, the merchant at his desk, the poet in his studio, the workingman in his shop, paused to send some aid to the stricken thousands. The first dispatch came from Boston offering a hundred thousand dollars. A million and a half of dollars were telegraphed on Tuesday. Prince Alexis of Russia sent five thousand dollars, and an equal sum came from a young Prince in Japan. Cincinnati sent a train-load of food, and cooks and

distributors, and a hundred thousand dollars in cash. As did one, so did all, until there had come to the homeless more than five millions of dollars, in addition to the uncounted values in food, and in private gifts from friend to friend. It is not to be wondered at that the tender and the gifted mind of the poet Whittier could not remain silent:

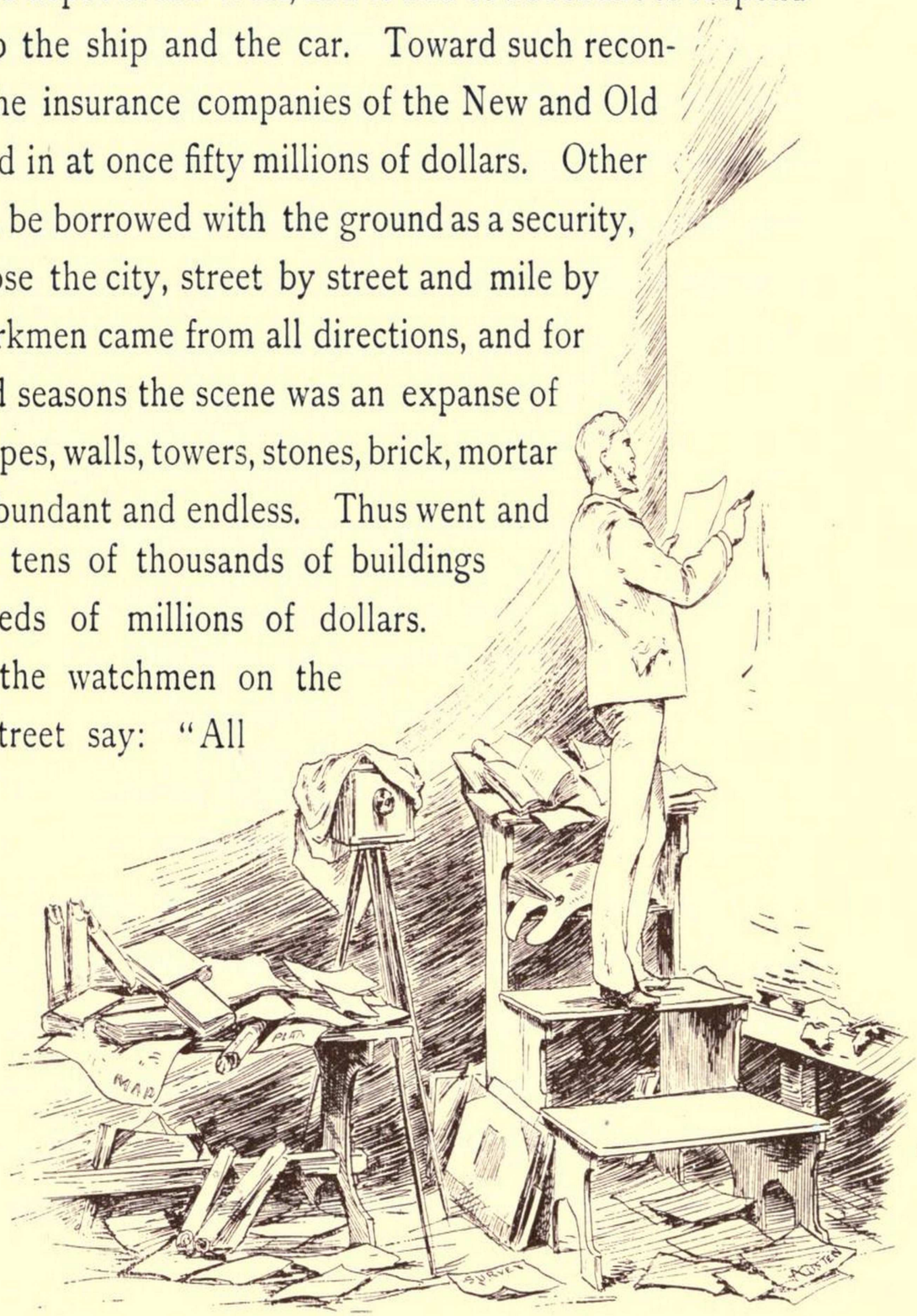
"A sudden impulse thrilled each will
That signalled round that sea of fire,
Swift words of cheer, warm heart throbs came;
In tears of pity died the flame.

"From east and west from south and north
The messages of hope shot forth,
And underneath the severing wave
The world full-handed reached to save.

"Fair seemed the old; but fairer still
The new the dreary void shall fill,
With dearer homes than those o'erthrown,
For love shall lay each corner stone."

If power destroyed Chicago, so power compelled it to rise again. The railways pointed toward it, and hundreds of trains were moving to it with grain, stock and merchandise even while it was burning. Toward it a hundred vessels were sailing on the great lakes. The grain fields, the lumber forests, the mines of coal and ores did not know of any such conflagration. The city

was only the depot of the West, and it had to be rebuilt to respond instantly to the ship and the car. Toward such reconstruction the insurance companies of the New and Old Worlds paid in at once fifty millions of dollars. Other sums could be borrowed with the ground as a security, and up arose the city, street by street and mile by mile. Workmen came from all directions, and for months and seasons the scene was an expanse of derricks, ropes, walls, towers, stones, brick, mortar and dust, abundant and endless. Thus went and came back tens of thousands of buildings and hundreds of millions of dollars. And now the watchmen on the midnight street say: "All is well."



THE ARTIST RECORDING HISTORY.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PAINTING.

THE observer in the Cyclorama of the great Chicago Fire is presumed to stand in an elevated position on the site of old Fort Dearborn—the cradle and birth-place of Chicago—and immediately south of the Rush street bridge.

When it was determined to produce the great Cyclorama of the burning of Chicago, the artists realized that there would be at least three things that the people visiting it would like to see, viz: the Ruins of Chicago, the Fire of Chicago, and some of the unburnt portion of the old city, showing the style of architecture and familiar street scenes of the ante-fire days. By looking southwest one may see the devastation wrought by the flames, and be able to understand what the people of Chicago had to begin business with the next day. Here are hundreds of acres of ruins, smoking hot; in fact, everything on the South Side, west of State street, being at this hour in ruins—all of which is historically correct, and shows truthfully the situation early upon the morning of October 9, 1871. Prominent among the ruins may be seen the First National Bank Building, Tribune Building, the old Court House, Crosby Opera House, Honore Block, Palmer House, the Republic Life Insurance Building and hundreds of others.

The most spectacular and thrilling feature of the scene is to

be found in the north division, that seems to be at this hour a literal sea of fire, without an island; the surging flames are sweeping through the north division with indescribable fury; the air is filled with flying brands, sparks and cinders; the streets are veritable whirlwinds of fire, falling walls and crumbling buildings on every hand. The whole effect is grand and awful in the extreme.

A charming feature of the great canvas is the historical restoration of a portion of old Chicago, showing many streets and hundreds of buildings as they were before the fire destroyed them; in fact, at this early morning hour the fire had not reached the lake shore, except at the water-works, all of the north division east of Cass street being yet unharmed, all of Michigan and part of Wabash avenue being intact, while close at hand are many interesting landmarks of early Chicago, particularly the old Lake House, upon the corner of North Water and Rush streets, which is said to be the first brick building put up in Chicago. Just east of the observer, on Michigan avenue, the old U. S. Marine Hospital Building, which is, without doubt, the finest example of architectural painting that can be found in any part of the world to-day. Amid the billowy ocean of flame to the north and west of the observer, standing out in bold relief, are the old and the new St. James Churches, the Cathedral of the Holy Name, Dr. Collyer's Unity Church and the New England Church, while upon the shores of this fiery ocean stands the church of Prof. David

Swing. Just beyond the churches one may see dimly through the fire and smoke the residence of M. D. Ogden, Esq., that passed unharmed through the fire—the only building in the north division, within the fire limits, that escaped. The scene along the lake shore, in and about the hospital and the bridge, is one of indescribable confusion; men, women and children, with horses, wagons and vehicles of all kinds, loaded with valuable goods or personal effects, are struggling frantically to get they know not where, but each is seeking his individual safety at the expense of everything else. When the eye has tired of contemplating the ruin wrought by the flames, the seething sea of fire to the northwest and the mad and wild confusion of the surging multitude, one may look away to the eastward over a beautiful marine view where the vision may find quiet and rest, where the early morning sun, glinting with silvery sheen the distant waters, is all that is left to cheer amid the awful disaster that is in and about and encompassing all.

As a subject, the Chicago Fire is the most difficult one that has ever been successfully transferred to canvas, and altogether it is the most elaborate and expensive work of art ever created in the history of the world, the cost of the same to the company being $250,000. The great canvas, with its superb setting, tells the immortal story of the burning of Chicago more faithfully, eloquently and truthfully than could be done by a whole library of books.

## INTERESTING FIGURES REGARDING THE BURNING OF CHICAGO. OCTOBER 8 AND 9, 1871.

There are some events in history too great for the human mind to grasp in their entirety, and this is the case with the Chicago Fire. This disaster was unique in the history of conflagrations, and so unlike everything else in the way of fires that no comparisons can justly be made. Never before or since has such great destruction been wrought by flames.

The Chicago Fire swept over an area of one hundred and twenty-five acres every hour from start to finish!

It destroyed the homes of one hundred people every minute!

The loss in property was a million dollars every five minutes!

Nearly eighteen thousand buildings reduced to ruins—seventeen every minute!

Over two hundred millions of property destroyed!

A hundred thousand people rendered homeless in a day!

If all the buildings burned were placed end to end they would make an unbroken line one hundred and fifty miles long!

To walk over all the streets in the burned district would require four days of good traveling!

The Chicago Fire was a terrible blow to the insurance companies throughout the world, many of which had placed very

heavy lines of risks in the city. There were scores of local companies with small capital that were wiped out by the great fire. Some paid but little and others nothing. However, much insurance was found to be good, many of the old line companies responding immediately dollar for dollar. The first loss paid after the great fire was paid by the Agency of R. S. Critchell to Hart, Asten & Co., as noted by the *Chicago Tribune* of October 12, 1871. Other payments quickly followed, and this served to encourage and reassure the people, and rebuilding was quickly begun and carried on year after year with astonishing rapidity.

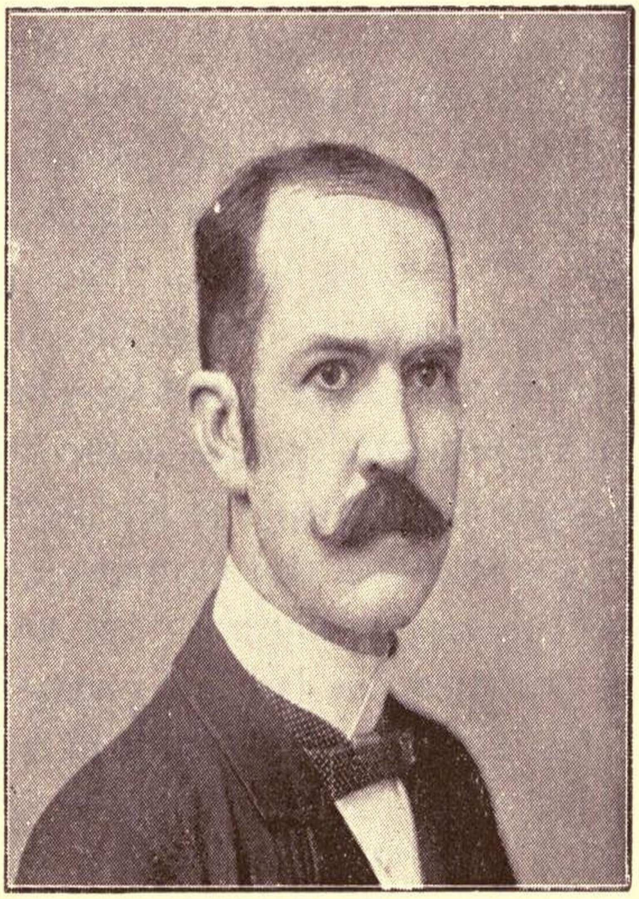
Without doubt the most complete compilation of statistics of the Chicago Fire was prepared by Elias Colbert, of the *Chicago Tribune.* Prof. Colbert is peculiarly well adapted to a work of this kind, where keen discrimination, mathematical exactness, and conscientious and persistent effort is so necessary. He is regarded as one of the best authorities living, upon the burning of Chicago.

## THE PROMOTERS OF THE GREAT CYCLORAMA OF THE CHICAGO FIRE.

The promoters of the Cyclorama showing the burning of Chicago are Messrs. Isaac N. Reed and Howard H. Gross, co-partners as Reed & Gross, with headquarters at Melbourne, Australia, London, England, and Chicago, Illinois. They are now recognized as the foremost men in the world for the production of this class of work. By the application of first-class business capacity to the problem, a keen discrimination as to the abilities of artists and a true appreciation of the merits of results, together with a wide experience, ample means and an extended acquaintance, have enabled them to successfully bring out some of the best Cycloramas ever produced, the last and greatest of all is The Chicago Fire. This stands as a monument to their courage and ability. In speaking of this remarkable production, as one of the great Chicago dailies says: "It entitles them to the thanks of the community; they have done a great work for this and succeeding generations, in thus resurrecting the buildings and ruins of Chicago with historic accuracy, and preserving them for all time to come."

Mr. Reed is a typical Chicago man, possessing an untiring

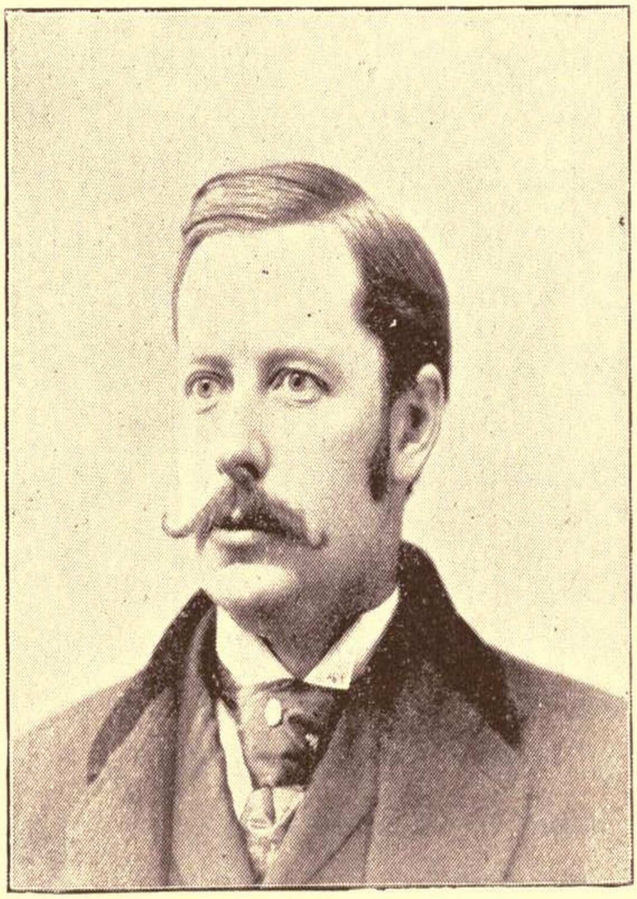
energy and a fixedness of purpose that wins. He has been uniformly successful in all his business undertakings. He is now in Melbourne, Australia, and gives his time to the foreign work department of the firm's extended business.



ISAAC N. REED.

Mr. Gross is the one man of all others to whom the public are indebted for this grand historic reproduction of the burning of Chicago. He is a man of rare business qualifications and a

marked capacity for organization and direction. In gathering from a thousand and one sources the necessary data for this production, arranging and verifying it, and directing the work of the artists through the many long months of their labors, he has



HOWARD H. GROSS.

accomplished a work of enormous magnitude, and has carried to a most successful completion an undertaking that was regarded by many good judges as quite impossible.

The painting was supplied to the Company by Messrs. Reed and Gross. The contract has been fulfilled by them to the entire satisfaction of the Company, and to the surprise and delight of all beholders of this great work. The subject is the most difficult one that has ever been transferred to canvas, and altogether it is the most elaborate and expensive work of art ever attempted. Messrs. Reed and Gross received for their contract $250,000.

The paints used were all specially prepared and ground in poppy seed oil, and are probably the finest ever used upon a Cyclorama. They were supplied principally by John W. Masury & Son, of New York and Chicago. Some of the colors cost from $5.00 to $30.00 per pound. Nearly two tons of paints and oils were required. The supplies, brushes and tube colors were furnished by the popular firm of Geo. E. Watson & Co., of this city. The canvas is nearly fifty feet high and about 400 feet long. Approximately 20,000 square feet of surface. The work, if it had been done by one man, would have required over twenty years to complete.

# THE ARTISTS.

The preparation and execution of so great an undertaking as the creation of the Great Chicago Fire upon a canvas covering twenty thousand square feet of space, making the work worthy of the subject, and a truthful portrayal of the sublime grandeur, the awful terror and desolate ruin so quickly wrought, is a subject that inspired the artists to their noblest effort. They became so enraptured with the work, that they seemed to live in and become a part of it. Some of them at times became so oblivious to all, except some especially thrilling scene they were then working out, that time, place and situation was lost to them; the hours would come and go unnoticed, until aroused by a comrade and informed that the day was done, and then only would they realize the demand of nature for food and rest.

Salvador Mège of Paris is recognized in the profession as an artist of remarkable ability and versatility. Capable of doing an enormous amount of work in a given time, to him was committed, together with Mr. Austen, the fire effects, the tones and values of sky, lake and ruins. The canvas alone can speak and say how well the work has been done.

Mr. Edward James Austen of London was indispensable. Mr. Austen is not only an artist of rare ability, but he is a thorough mathematician, and a master of perspective drawing. Mr. Austen and Mr. Mège laid out the entire city, locating and drawing all the streets, locating ruins and indicating points of historic interest. All lines upon the canvas that seem to the observer to be straight, are in fact curved, so the difficulties in making the maze of streets and alleys appear right is a task that called for the very acme of skill and painstaking effort. Mr. Austen has been for years a prominent figure in Cyclorama work, some of the best bits to be found in the Cycloramas of Gettysburg, Jerusalem, The Siege of Paris, and The Chicago Fire, are from his brush. During the progress of the work Mr. Austen was severely injured by falling from a scaffold, and for weeks could not leave his bed. He chafed and fretted in confinement, talked and dreamed of his idol, and at last when barely able to stand, and against the advice of his physician and the entreaties of his wife, he returned to the canvas to complete his work.

Oliver Dennett Grover, of the Chicago Art Institute, is so well known to Chicago people that he needs no introduction, and no words of fulsome praise could add to his reputation as an artist of exceptional ability. He is conscientious in his work to the last degree. Mr. Grover is seen at his best in composition and figure work, and to him was committed the general arrangement, composition and ensemble of the figure painting.

Paul Wilhelmi, now of Chicago, but formerly of Dusseldorf, is an artist of whom it is a pleasure to speak. His great ability was recognized in this work by committing to his hands a large share of foreground groups and figures. The scene in and about the two tugs was drawn and painted by him. Mr. Wilhelmi has abundant resources; he seldom repeats himself. There is about his work an air of originality not common even among Cyclorama artists.

William Leftwich Dodge is a young man, scarcely twenty-five, but he is such an enthusiast in his profession that he has had more experience and done more work than the average man of forty. He calls New York his home, but in fact he is cosmopoli-

tan, dividing his time among the art centers of the world. Mr. Dodge is brilliant, even dashing, with a splendid physique and untiring energy. His future will undoubtedly prove a triumph for him. Mr. Dodge was a pupil of Gerome for eight years.

Mr. Ernest Albert is an American artist who has made a very enviable reputation, and is in fact the leading man in his special work. Mr. Albert is very original, full of resources, and a first-class all-around man. Whatever he attempts he succeeds in. The painting by him of the north pier from the bridge to the lighthouse is a particularly happy effect. One of the features of the painting that attracts a great deal of attention and provokes much favorable comment is the reflection of the firelight upon the windows and buildings in this part of the painting.

Richard Lorenz, the great animal painter, calls Munich his home, and has spent the best years of his life in and about that city. At the present time he is in Milwaukee, Wis., teaching in the art school there. Mr. Lorenz is a strong, bold painter, his especial delight being horses.

Charles A. Corwin is an American artist who has spent many years in study in the best schools of art in Europe. He does uniformly well whatever he undertakes, and is particularly strong as a figure painter. The masses on the lake front, and many of

the middle-distance figures are his work. He also painted quite a number of ruins.

Edgar S. Cameron, the artist and art critic of the *Chicago Tribune*, did effective work on middle-distance figures. The results of his effort have been much admired, and stamp him as an artist of undoubted ability.

A. Fleury, of Paris, is well known across the water as an artist of rare qualifications, his strong hold being marine architecture.

C. H. Collins, now a resident of Iowa, is a modest, unassuming man, who has remarkable ability as an artist, and has spent years outdoors painting from nature. His untiring energy and great natural ability has enabled him to become what might be termed a self-made man in his profession. Mr. Collins has probably worked upon more Cycloramas than any other artist, except Mr. Austen. Some of the most effective ruins upon the great canvas are his work.

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